

# Shopping smart!

## Main idea

Developing food shopping skills can help families buy foods that are low-cost and nutritious, and keep foods safe to eat.

## Objectives

Participants will be able to

1. plan before shopping to save money and purchase the most nutritious foods,
2. select foods from each of the Food Guide Pyramid groups that fit a thrifty spending plan,
3. use Nutrition Facts labels while shopping to select foods with the most nutrition for the least amount of money,
4. keep food safe when purchasing, transporting, and storing; and
5. discuss the influence of children on food shopping and learn ways to teach children about nutrition while they help with shopping.

## Materials needed

*Shopping smart!* (NP-138, one per participant)

Pencils for each participant

Newsprint chart

Easel (optional)

Five markers

Masking tape

*Nutrition Facts label poster* (NP-139, one copy)

Actual containers (can be flattened) for quick-cooking (5 minute) rice and regular rice, tuna, a brand name rice cereal, and store brand rice cereal

A list showing flour, brown sugar, and rice

*Let your children help you discussion cards* (NP-140, one set)

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### ... and justice for all

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## Preparation needed

Prior to the meeting:

1. Make sure you have enough copies of *Shopping smart!* (NP-138) and pencils for each participant.
2. On separate sheets of newsprint write: “before you shop,” “when you shop,” “after you shop,” and the names of the five major food groups from the Food Guide Pyramid.
3. Collect actual containers for quick-cooking (5 minute) rice and regular rice, tuna, a brand name rice cereal and store brand rice cereal, and a list showing flour, brown sugar, and rice.
4. You may wish to laminate the *Nutrition Facts label poster* (NP-139) so that it will be more durable.
5. Cut apart your set of *Let your children help you discussion cards* (NP-140). You may wish to laminate the cards so they will be more durable.

At the meeting site:

1. Set up the newsprint chart on an easel so all participants can see it easily. Or make sure you can tape the paper to the walls and write on it easily.
2. Assemble all other materials so they are readily available while teaching.

## Introduction

Hand out copies of *Shopping smart!* (NP-138) and a pencil to each participant. Throughout the lesson, as you ask questions (**printed in bold**), wait for answers from the group and encourage discussion.

Let’s take a moment to talk about the mini-goals you set at the last session. **Does anyone have a success story to share?**

Our lesson today is on smart food shopping. I think when we shop for our families, we all have similar goals in mind. **When you go food shopping, what are some of your goals?**

Wait for responses from the group. Responses may include: want foods to taste good, want to buy foods that are nutritious, want to buy food that fits our budget, want to be able to purchase enough food so that no one goes hungry, want the food we buy to be safe to eat.

## Main concept #1

*Planning before you shop can help you save money and purchase the most nutritious foods.*

We want to achieve all of these goals with the resources we have available, whether we are shopping with cash or a combination of cash and Food Stamps or WIC coupons. During today's lesson, we are going to share with each other food shopping techniques we have discovered that can help us achieve these goals.

The smart shopper knows that failing to plan is planning to fail. Put another way, shopping doesn't begin when you arrive at the store. The smart shopper has been doing some planning for the shopping trip. **What kind of planning do you think the smart shopper does at home before going shopping?**

Put up newsprint labeled "before you shop." Write down responses from the group. Responses may include: plans menus, plans a shopping list by checking menus against supplies on hand, keeps a running list of staple items such as flour or sugar that are used up during the week, checks store ads in newspapers, checks mailed fliers for specials and coupons, has a meal or snack before shopping (a smart shopper doesn't shop hungry). Add any ideas that have been missed. Encourage participants to write down ideas they would like to try on their worksheet.

**How do you think this planning affects the amount of money you spend?**

Wait for responses from the group and discuss. The main idea is that planning will help save money.

**How does this planning affect the nutrition you provide your family?**

Wait for responses from the group and discuss. The main idea is that planning will help the shopper purchase more nutritious foods for the family.

The next important step of shopping is what happens at the store.

Put up the newsprint labeled "When you shop."

First let's decide how often we should go to the store. **Who do you think spends less money: the person who does his or her main shopping once a month, the person who shops once a week, or the person who shops several times a week?**

Wait for responses and ask why they think their choice is correct. Write "once a month" on the newsprint sheet.

The person who does major shopping once a month and then just buys milk and other perishables, like fresh fruits and vegetables, each week tends to spend less on groceries. This may be because this person has a plan and does less impulse buying. It also might be because the person buys larger sizes of items. Or it might be that the person has menu plans for taking advantage of low-cost foods.

Write key phrases like "less impulse buying," "family size/bulk packages," and "low-cost foods" on the newsprint as you talk. You may want to add a caution that buying in bulk isn't economical if food will spoil before it is eaten. Encourage participants to write down ideas they would like to try on their worksheet.

## Main concept #2

*Select foods within each food group that are low cost and nutritious.*

Let's do some brainstorming to share your knowledge of foods that are lowest in cost in each group of the Food Guide Pyramid.

If the class is at least 10 people, divide the class into five groups of two or more people. Give each group one of the newsprint sheets with the name of a food group and a marker. Ask each group to list ideas for keeping food costs low in their food group. If the class is smaller than 10 people, brainstorm ideas for each food group as a large group.

Let's share our lists. Select someone from your group to read your list. We are going to start with the bread, cereal, rice, and pasta group, then work our way up the Food Guide Pyramid. As each group reads its list, we will see if anyone has ideas to add to the lists. On your worksheet you can write down ideas that you want to try.

Possible ideas follow. As each group presents its list, allow participants time to write down ideas they would like to try on page two of their worksheet.

#### **Bread, cereal, rice, and pasta group**

- Standard cooked cereals, like oatmeal and Cream of Wheat, are less expensive than microwave hot cereals or ready-to-serve cold cereals.
- Plain cereals are less expensive than highly sugared cereals or cereals with added fruits and nuts.
- Regular rice is less expensive than quick-cooking rice.
- Biscuits and muffins made from scratch (from basic ingredients) are cheaper than purchasing mixes or ready-to-bake items.
- Cake mixes can be less expensive than making cakes from scratch.
- White bread may be less expensive than whole grain bread, but does not have as many nutrients and is not as filling.
- Quantity, brand, and grocery store influence the price of pasta.
- Bread is cheaper than bagels, English muffins, or pita bread.

#### **Vegetable and fruit groups**

- Avoid overbuying fresh produce to avoid waste. Canned produce is less perishable.
- Canned and frozen produce may be cheaper than fresh.
- Seasonal fruits and vegetables can be the best buy.
- Bulk bags of frozen vegetables are less expensive per ounce than boxed vegetables.
- Frozen vegetables without sauces are less expensive than vegetables with sauces.
- Frozen juice can be less expensive than juice in bottles or cartons.
- Packaging adds to the cost of products—like small boxes of raisins or individual boxes of juice.
- Pre-washed salad greens are more expensive than unwashed greens.

#### **Milk, yogurt, and cheese group**

- Milk is the least expensive way to provide dairy foods for your family. The lower the fat content, the less expensive the milk.
- Reduced fat cheese is usually more expensive than regular cheese.
- Frozen desserts (like ice cream and frozen yogurt) are cheaper per serving by the half gallon than pints or novelty products.
- Pudding can be made less expensively from scratch than from a box mix.

- Preshredded cheese is sometimes, but not always, more expensive than chunk cheese.
- Packages of pre-wrapped cheese slices are more expensive per ounce than unsliced cheese.

#### **Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs and nuts group**

- Dry beans and eggs are low-cost protein foods.
- Canned beans are more expensive than dry beans.
- Chicken and fish are more expensive when purchased already breaded or partially prepared.
- Family packs of beef, pork, or chicken cuts are usually less expensive per pound.
- Boned chicken is more expensive than unboned.
- Buying on sale can lower the expense for this food group if you have the freezer space to buy ahead.

Let's take a look at some actual food examples to show how the choices we make at the store can save money.

Hold up each food container as you discuss the following examples. Have the newsprint sheet labeled "when you shop" handy for writing down key phrases.

**Which is the least expensive—quick-cooking rice or regular rice? Is the savings on each serving of regular rice 5 1/2 cents or 13 1/2 cents?**

The answers are regular rice and 13 1/2 cents. Add the words "convenience costs" to the newsprint list.

**Which is the least expensive – a 13.5 ounce box of name brand rice cereal (such as Rice Krispies) or a 13.5 ounce box of store brand rice cereal (such as Crisp Rice)? Is the savings on the least expensive box \$0.75 or \$1.20?**

The answers are store brand rice cereal and \$1.20. Add the words "name brands are higher" to the newsprint list.

Tuna, which is regularly priced at 62 cents a can is on sale for 48 cents a can. **How much would you save if you bought enough to use tuna six times during the month—\$0.64 or \$0.84?**

The answer is \$0.84. Add the words "take advantage of sales" to the newsprint list.

I need to buy flour, brown sugar, and rice. **Will they be less expensive at a small town grocery store or small neighborhood store or at a large warehouse market?**

The answer is a large warehouse market.

When priced, the savings was \$3.07 on the four items, partially because larger sizes were available at the warehouse market. It may pay to buy foods in more than one place sometimes—especially non-perishable, staple items.

Add “buy staples at lowest priced store” to the newsprint list.

Nutrition-conscious food shoppers with good budget control tend to spend their money on certain foods. On page two of your worksheet, there is a listing of foods. Look at this list and decide which three items are bought less often by shoppers who are able to stay within a thrifty food budget.

Note: The Thrifty Food Plan is the lowest cost food plan developed by the USDA. The cost of the plan is updated monthly.

Allow some time for participants to mark their worksheets.

The successful shoppers spend the least amount of money on meat and fish (other than ground beef), soft drinks, and alcoholic beverages. They are buying more nutritious, low-cost foods from the bread and cereal group, vegetables, fruits and milk—foods from the bottom half of the Food Guide Pyramid. They do have some treats, because they buy some cakes and cookies.

### **Main concept #3**

*The Nutrition Facts label can help you select foods with the most nutrition for the least amount of money.*

Tape up the Nutrition Facts label poster.

In addition to getting as much food as you can for your money, it is good to get as much nutrition as you can for your money. The Nutrition Facts label can help you. The label can help you



control the fat, cholesterol, and sodium in your diet and it can help you find more fiber, calcium, iron, vitamin A, and vitamin C.

Add “use nutrition label” to the newsprint list.

Let’s go through the food groups in the Food Guide Pyramid and talk about what parts of the nutrition label can help us make wise purchases in each group. **What parts of the label would you check when you are buying foods in the bread, cereal, rice and pasta group?**

Answers include: fiber content in breads and cereals, sugar content of cereals, fat content of cakes/cookies/crackers. Point out these places to look on label.

**When buying canned or frozen fruits and vegetables, what would you check on labels?**

Answers include: sodium content of vegetables, vitamin A and C content.

**When buying dairy products, what would you check on the labels?**

Answers include: calcium content, fat content.

**When buying packaged meats or canned meats what would you check on the label?**

Answers include: fat content, sodium content.

There is a rule we can use when looking at food labels and deciding if foods are high or low in a nutrient. It’s the 5 and 20 rule. If a food has a percent daily value that is 5 percent or less, it is low in that nutrient. If the percent daily value is 20 percent or more, it is high in that nutrient.

**Which two nutrients would we want to be 5 percent or less on the Nutrition Facts label?**

The answers are fat and sodium.

For fat and sodium, if the percent daily value is 5 percent or less, that is a food we can eat anytime.



#### Main concept #4

*After shopping for foods, keep foods safe to eat by transporting and storing them correctly.*

But, if the percent daily value is 20 percent or more for fat or sodium, that is a food to think about. You may want to check the labels on similar foods to see if there is a better choice, or you may want to limit how often you eat this food.

We are getting close to having a complete list of skills for shopping at the store. But there is one more skill area to talk about and that is purchasing safe foods. **What are some things to think about to be sure you are getting fresh, safe foods?**

Answers include: check dates on packages, select cans that aren't dented or bulging, select food packages that aren't torn or damaged, select frozen vegetables that are loose (not an icy block which indicates thawing and refreezing), select fresh fruits and vegetables that aren't bruised. Add "choose fresh, safe foods" to the "after you shop" newsprint list. Encourage participants to write down these ideas on their worksheet.

How you place foods in the shopping cart and in bags for taking the foods home also affects food safety. Place meats and poultry products in the cart so that juices do not drip onto other foods. Package meat products in a separate bag for transporting them home.

Add "keep meats and poultry separated from other foods" to the newsprint list.

When you have finished shopping, go directly home. This is especially important in the summer for foods that need refrigeration.

Add "go directly home" to the newsprint list.

When you arrive home, put perishable foods in the refrigerator or freezer immediately to keep them safe.

Add "put perishable foods away immediately" to the newsprint list.

## Main concept #5

*Children can learn about good nutrition by helping with food shopping.*

Most parents have some pretty big influences with them as they shop—their children. **Have your kids ever asked you to buy something they saw advertised on television?**

We can either let kids nag and pressure us as we shop, or we can let them help us. Team up with another person in the class and draw one of these discussion cards. Discuss whether this is something you might try with your children and how this might help them learn about nutrition.

Allow time for the group to discuss their cards. Have each pair share their card with the group. Encourage participants to write down ideas they would like to try on their worksheet.

## Summary

We have talked about a lot of ideas today to help us become smart shoppers. Let's briefly review the steps a smart shopper takes.

Review the "before you shop," "when you shop," and "after you shop" lists on newsprint.

## Set a mini-goal

We have reached the time in our lesson for setting a mini-goal. A mini-goal is something you want to work on to be a smarter shopper. What you choose could be from our lists of ideas for things to do before you go to the store, at the store, or after shopping, or it might be an idea you got for purchasing less expensive food from each food group.

Write your mini-goal on your worksheet. You may want to share what you are going to work on with someone sitting beside you in class or with a family member.

Thanks for coming today. Our next meeting will be . . .

Provide date, time, location, and topic for the next lesson.

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